

ARNOLD ARBORETUM
HARVARD UNIVERSITYBULLETIN
OF
POPULAR INFORMATION

JAMAICA PLAIN, MASS.

MAY 6, 1919

Japanese Cherry-trees. Of the numerous Asiatic Cherry-trees now established in the Arboretum the handsomest with single flowers are *Prunus serrulata* var. *sachalinensis*, the Sargent Cherry, *P. subhirtella*, and *P. yedoensis*. These three trees have flowered and produced their fruit for many years in the Arboretum, and have shown the ability to adapt themselves perfectly to the peculiar and difficult conditions of the New England climate. *P. serrulata* var. *sachalinensis* is the northern form of a Cherry-tree which occurs in three varieties in Japan, Korea, and central China. It was once an important tree in the forests of northern Japan and Saghalien but has now been largely cut for the wood which has been used for printing blocks. This Cherry was first raised here from seeds sown in 1890, and when in flower is the handsomest tree introduced by the Arboretum into western gardens. The delicate pink or rose-colored flowers are short-lived, but the handsome foliage which is distinctly tinged with red as the leaves unfold turns to brilliant shades of orange and red in the autumn. *Prunus serrulata* and its varieties have produced a number of forms with double flowers, and these are the hardiest and most valuable of the double-flowered Japanese Cherries which can be grown successfully in this climate. There are fourteen double-flowered named varieties of the Sargent Cherry in the Arboretum Collection, but only two or three of them are large enough to have flowered here. These double-flowered Cherries bloom two or three weeks later than the single-flowered trees, and from these may be expected some of the handsomest flowering trees which are hardy in the north. Although double-flowered Japanese Cherry-trees have been cultivated in the United States and Europe

for fully sixty years, they have never grown to a large size or given much satisfaction in western gardens. The trouble has been in the stock on which these double-flowered plants have been grafted. The proper stock for them is naturally the single-flowered species of which they are varieties, and if such stock is used there can be little doubt that larger and healthier trees will be secured than have been obtained when other species have been used as stock in Japanese and in American and European nurseries. It is fortunate that the plants of the Sargent Cherry produce every year good crops of seeds in the Arboretum; these seeds are carefully gathered and widely distributed so that there is reason to hope that in a few years this tree will adorn many American parks and gardens and supply stock on which the handsomest of the double-flowered Cherries can be successfully grafted.

Prunus subhirtella. This is the Spring Cherry of the Japanese, which one traveller has described as the most delightful and floriferous of all Japanese Cherries. It is a large shrub rather than a tree, and few plants can produce more flowers than the two large specimens in the Arboretum where they have been growing for twenty-five years. The flowers are drooping, pale pink becoming nearly white as they begin to fade. Those of no other single-flowered Cherry which has been grown in the Arboretum last so long in good condition. This Cherry is not known as a wild plant, but it is a good deal cultivated in the gardens of western Japan although rare in those of Tokyo. Unfortunately it does not reproduce itself from seed, for the seedlings are those of a tall slender tree common in the forests of central Japan to which the name of *Prunus subhirtella* var. *ascendens* has been given. This is still a rare tree in cultivation and its value in this climate is not yet established. A form of the variety *ascendens* of *Prunus subhirtella* has pendulous branches and is the well known Japanese Weeping Cherry-tree (var. *pendula*) now common in American gardens. *Prunus subhirtella* can be slowly propagated by soft wood cuttings, but the best way to increase it is by grafting or budding it on its own seedlings. Seeds are produced in quantity on the Arboretum plants and will be distributed to nurserymen anxious to obtain stock on which to work the true *P. subhirtella*. When the stocks are ready the Arboretum will supply a moderate number of grafts, and the nurseryman who will make it his business to produce a supply of this beautiful Cherry for American gardens will do a good thing for this country and incidentally for himself.

Prunus yedoensis. This is the Cherry-tree which has been planted in great numbers in the squares, parks and temple grounds of Tokyo. It is a fast-growing short-lived tree rarely fifty feet high, with a short trunk not more than a foot in diameter and wide-spreading or erect branches. The flowers are white and slightly fragrant, and are followed by abundant small black fruit. This Cherry reproduces itself from seed and there is therefore no reason why it should not be common in American gardens.

Amelanchiers. Shad Bushes, as Amelanchiers are often called because they are supposed to flower when shad begin to ascend the rivers from the sea, add much to the beauty in early May of the Arboretum where they have been planted in considerable numbers. Amelanchier is almost entirely confined to North America where many species are found from Saskatchewan to Louisiana and from the Atlantic to the Pacific, one extra American species occurring in central Europe and another in central China. All Amelanchiers produce abundant pure white flowers in short drooping racemes, and blue-black sweet and edible berry-like fruits. The American species vary from shrubs hardly more than a foot or two high up to trees exceptionally sixty or seventy feet tall. The first species to flower, *A. canadensis*, is the larger of the two tree species, and although it grows in western New York to a large size it is more common in the south where it is often the only species. The more common northern tree, *A. laevis*, is a native of the Arboretum and is readily distinguished in early spring by the purple color of its young leaves. *A. oblongifolia*, which is a large arborescent shrub, is also a native of the Arboretum. It is this species which is gray in early spring from the thick felt of pale hairs on the young leaves and flower-clusters, and which has been largely planted along the Arboretum drives and is in bloom this week. A large collection of the shrubby species, American and foreign, is in the border on the left-hand side of the Meadow Road and on some of these plants flowers will open until nearly the end of May. For the lovers of flowers the season of Shad Bushes is one of the interesting periods in the Arboretum.

Unfolding leaves. The leaves of many trees are highly colored when they first unfold and such trees, like many of the American Oaks, are as distinct and attractive in the spring as they are in their autumn colors. In Massachusetts Oak leaves are still closely infolded in their buds, but young leaves now give beauty and distinction to at least two Asiatic trees, *Cercidiphyllum japonicum* and *Acer griseum*. The former is an old inhabitant of the Arboretum, having been raised here first in 1878. It is the largest Japanese tree with deciduous leaves, growing from the ground with numerous great stems. The flowers and fruits are inconspicuous, but the pyramidal habit of the tree is handsome and interesting. It owes its name to the shape of the leaves which resemble those of the Redbud (*Cercis*); these as they unfold are of a delicate rose pink color, and although they turn clear bright yellow in the autumn it is during the last week of April and in the first days of May that the *Cercidiphyllum* is more beautiful than at any other season of the year. *Acer griseum* is a Chinese Box Elder or Negundo discovered by Wilson in central China, and just now very distinct in the red color of the young leaves. This Maple as it grows on the mountains of China is a tree sometimes seventy feet high, with a short trunk and a rather narrow head of ascending branches. Among Maples it is distinct in the beautiful lustrous bright reddish brown bark which separates freely in thin plates like that of some Birch-trees. This is the most distinct and the handsomest of the Maples introduced from China in recent years which have proved perfectly hardy in the Arboretum, but unfortunately it is still extremely rare in western gardens.

Prinsepia sinensis is again covered with clusters of bright yellow flowers which spring from the axils of the half-grown leaves. This *Prinsepia* is a tall broad shrub with long spreading and arching branches, and stems armed with many spines. It is perfectly hardy and the handsomest shrub Manchuria has contributed to western gardens. There are only two specimens in the Arboretum and these came here from Petrograd in 1903 and 1906, and it has been found difficult to propagate them by cuttings. Fortunately last year one of the plants produced for the first time a few seeds and these have germinated, so there is reason to hope if the Arboretum plants become more fruitful that this species will be a common ornament in northern gardens. It has much to recommend it as a hedge plant. The species from northern China, *P. uniflora*, is a spiny shrub with small white flowers, and although it has little beauty its value for forming impenetrable hedges may prove considerable.

Prunus dasycarpa, which is sometimes called the Black Apricot from the dark color of its slightly downy fruit, is the first of May one of the handsome flowering trees in the Arboretum. It grows here both as a great round-headed shrub with several stems or as a tree with a single trunk, and every year is completely covered with its flowers composed of pure white petals and a bright red calyx. This tree, although it has been known in European gardens for at least a century, is apparently extremely rare in the United States. Its origin is doubtful; it has been considered a native of Siberia, but it is now generally acknowledged that it is a hybrid between a Plum and an Apricot. Although this tree has been growing in the Arboretum for twenty years, there is no record that it has produced fruit here on more than two occasions.

Two Useful Shrubs. Two plants useful for covering the margins of drives and the borders of shrubberies, *Rhus canadensis (aromatica)* and the Yellow Root (*Xanthorrhiza apiifolia*) are covered with flowers. Those of the former are small, pale yellow, arranged in compact heads, and appear before or with the unfolding of the leaves composed of three leaflets; those of the Yellow Root are purple in long drooping, terminal racemes. The flowers of these two eastern American plants are attractive, but their great horticultural value is in their habit of growth. The height of the *Rhus* is from two to four feet, with spreading branches, the lowest flat on the ground, and with an irregular top. In the autumn the leaves turn bright scarlet. For road borders and to plant when it is desirable to make a connection between larger shrubs and the ground no other plant which has been tried here has proved so successful. The Yellow Root is a dwarf shrub which soon spreads over a wide border and forms with its erect stems and divided leaves an excellent ground cover. Unfortunately it has failed to grow well in those parts of the country where the soil is strongly impregnated with lime.